

### **#28: Turn-Offs That Can Lead To Turnover By Patricia Wheeler**

What organizational challenges keep you up at night? If you're like many leaders, it's the concern that your company may not be sufficiently positioned for meeting global business challenges. What are some of the critical factors that must be addressed to keep you competitive or at advantage? One key factor is the ability to get, keep and develop enough of the right people. As Mercer Delta Consulting puts it, top talent is a corporate asset. Their recent global survey of senior executives across industries and geography found that two thirds believe they have significant weaknesses in their leadership pipeline. Developing successors is difficult; keeping talent is also challenging; Monster.com surveyed Human Resource leaders and found seventy per cent listed worker retention as their primary concern. Current research on this is both overwhelming and consistent.

Clearly, no great firm can afford to lose top talent. If keeping your best and brightest is key to your current and future success, it is essential to do all you can to keep these valued employees. Total compensation, challenging assignments, opportunities for growth, and a sense that your manager or boss is watching out for your career are all critical variables. And well understood by both HR professionals and the executive team. Yet despite this seemingly obvious knowledge, managers may often exhibit behaviors that over time erode trust and credibility and lead to turnover. So below is a primer of what not to do - a list of three of the "worst practices" that disengage talented workers. Hint: these practices are not confined to only "bad" companies. Many of us stray into this territory from time to time.

1. Making frequent autocratic decisions. While businesses are not run as a democracy, talented employees want to understand the context behind and the reasons for decisions. While leaders clearly hold the organizational vision and understand the key strategic priorities that drive success, it is essential to communicate how decisions are made, with an eye to involve others collaboratively whenever possible and appropriate. If you hire smart people, keep them involved, or at the very least, informed. This creates the best opportunity to develop their skills and capabilities. Managers who lead with incredible focus and a drive for results must remind themselves to pause and allow others to weigh in. While not every decision is or even should be made by consensus, there is a big difference over time between a workforce relationship based on compliance with executive decisions, versus one based on collaboration and communication.

2. Taking credit for others' ideas. In the heat of discussion, ideas are generated whose ownership is not directly traceable. Do everyone (including yourself) a favor: shine the light on all who contributed when you have the opportunity. You will benefit from basking in the reflected glow. Think of the quarterback who makes sure to thank his linemen. Not giving credit where it is due rarely goes unpunished and certainly stifles innovation and ownership.

3. Not making or keeping "face time" appointments. Leaders often underestimate the importance of their direct attention and presence. I coached one leader who received feedback that he needed to be more visible to his team, many of whom worked from remote locations. A modest guy, he was willing to listen to this feedback and do something about their requests, although the benefits were not clear to him. I encouraged him to set a schedule to meet with each direct report quarterly, in their own territory. After six months, he reported that his team was now much more energized and productive. He commented, "To me, I'm just Bill, and that's not a big deal...but what I

Subscribe at [www.LeadingNews.org](http://www.LeadingNews.org)

Contact us by phone at 404 377-9408 or by E-mail at [Patricia@LeadingNews.org](mailto:Patricia@LeadingNews.org)

discovered is that to my team, I represent senior leadership. Somehow, my being with them makes them feel valued and inspired. And that's worth the effort."

Another firm in which we worked made a good faith attempt to understand turnover and clearly heard from exit interviews that the main reason people left was not having enough "face time" with their boss. Sounds obvious – but smart and ambitious people want to know that someone is looking out for their career and is deliberately and consciously working to develop them.

So be honest with yourself: most of us are likely to, mostly inadvertently, engage in some behaviors that sub-optimize team spirit and development. One of the advantages of 360 feedback is having the experience of simply asking others how to be even more effective. Sounds obvious, but for many of us, asking these simple questions does not come automatically – we have to think about it and make it an intentional practice.

Action step: Take a good look at yourself and your organization (and, oh by the way – ask around): What are you doing to turn off....and turn on.....your talent?

Copyright 2006, Leading News

**Patricia Wheeler** is an executive coach and consultant who helps smart people become better leaders. As Managing Partner of the Levin Group LLC, she has spent over 15 years specializing in organizational systems dynamics and coaching senior leaders. A distance-learning expert, Patricia uses an action-oriented and results-based approach to coach teams within global organizations, leading to increased synergy and bottom-line results. She publishes Leading News in collaboration, renowned executive coach Marshall Goldsmith. You may contact Patricia by E-mail at [Patricia@TheLevinGroup.com](mailto:Patricia@TheLevinGroup.com) or by telephone at 404 377-9408.